

Arlington Bicycle Committee Minutes for November 4, 2002

In attendance were board members Ted Packard, Ron Sender, Scott Smith, Stephan Miller, and Christopher Tonkin. Others present were Pete Howard, Bryce Nesbitt, Bobby Mac, Wayne Maceyka, Walter Mayne, David McKenna and Joey Glushko.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35

Introductions were made around the room.

The minutes from the last meeting were approved as presented.

Review of recent events.

Library Donations. Jack showed us a book donated to the library by ABAC. This was to prove that the bicycling books and other materials that we donated are indeed in the library. They are hard to find because they are integrated with the rest of the collection rather than in a special bicycling section.

InterBike. Jack attended the Interbike conference in Las Vegas. Interbike is the annual bicycle industry convention. Jack told us that the Bicycle industry has (finally) embraced bicycle advocacy. All the advocacy groups were at the conference so Jack was able to make some new contacts. The big push in the near future is advocating for the renewal of T-21 (to become T3). The effort will be called America Bikes.

There was a motion made and passed that ABAC should join America Bikes. Jack will sign us up.

MHD Statewide Bicycle Conference. The major topic of conversation was that health departments around the country are discussing the obesity epidemic. Health costs are escalating so health departments are pushing bicycling and walking rather than a visit to the health club. People are likely to skip visits to the health club because of cost or inconvenience. Biking or walking can be done in the normal course of the day and are less disruptive.

Bicycling and Arlington schools. Dave McKenna who is the town safety officer, an Arlington Police officer and chairman of the school committee gave us his views about children biking to school in Arlington. Pedestrian safety is taught in preschool and kindergarten. Later general safety is taught in first and second grades. Bicycle safety is taught to children's groups that visit the police department only. Bike safety cannot be taught in school because there is not enough time. Biking to school is discouraged for two reasons. The town cannot provide safe routes and there is no safe place to park the bikes once at the school. In addition, motor vehicle traffic around the schools make biking and walking dangerous.

Officer McKenna does not encourage or endorse the bike portion of Safe Routes to School. He believes that the motor vehicle traffic around the schools in the morning and afternoon is terrible and advocating riding bikes to school would make the Town liable for any injuries.

Officer McKenna said that people are very focused on getting from one point to another as fast as possible. He fears that this mentality will drive someone to back into a child who is on the street or sidewalk walking or biking to school.

Jack explained that children have gotten written notices telling them not to ride to school. He also noted that some parents have voiced the opinion that they should be able to make those decisions for their children. Bryce cited a recent study that biking and walking to school were less dangerous than a teen driving younger children to school.

Jack asked for the views of the committee and volunteers to help solve this dilemma. Officer McKenna informed us that Arlington is a major cut through route and this fact makes bicycling even more dangerous. Ted would like to see his son able to ride to school but he cannot because of the "policy" against it. Jack added that more bikers and walkers would mean fewer cars near the schools.

Scott informed us that the most important factor in bike safety is the experience of the rider. This experience is a more important factor than road conditions. Bobby told us about his bicycle training course at Arlington High School. He feels that the health benefits are important and more than compensate for the slight danger.

Christopher thinks that we need bike programs in the lower grades and that bike safety is needed regardless of whether children ride to school and we should advocate safe bicycling. Bryce suggested educating new drivers to look for people on bicycles.

Bobby, Joey, Wayne, Ted, Scott, Christopher, Ron and Jack voiced their interest in advocating and participating in devising a program for training Arlington students to correctly ride bicycles. Ron asked Officer McKenna where to get permission to let students ride to school. Officer McKenna made the suggestion that we make a presentation to the Superintendent of Schools.

On Road Transportation Issues.

Scott told us of preliminary plans for meeting of the East Arlington Good Neighbors Committee concerning the renovation of the Mass. Ave. corridor. In addition, the Summer St. reconstruction project has been scheduled to begin in March although the bid has not yet gone out. A wide shoulder will be built on Summer St. on both sides wherever possible. After reconstruction, the road will belong to the Town. Joey informed us that there will be a light and a cross walk in front of the new park.

Bikeway maintenance. Ron and Jack met with Rich Bento to speak about bikeway maintenance. The maintenance fund is over spent so the town will finish the edges of the

bikeway. Officer McKenna said that there is a problem of people driving (mistakenly) up the bikeway after hockey games at the rink. We will ask that No Motorized Vehicles signs be placed at road intersections. The town is still working on the design of the Bow St. ramp onto the bicycle path and trying to find some way to pay for it. The bikeway maintenance fund was to help defray costs. Joey suggested that we ask local businesses to contribute to the maintenance of the bikeway. We will take it up at the next meeting.

Joey informed us that she attended the first meeting of the Friends of the Alewife Path. She told us that there was a decent turnout and that discussion concentrated on the Sunnyside area. The neighborhood has issues about the new path and they were aired at the meeting. The MDC is currently recommending a bicycle and rollerblade path on the Somerville side and a walking path on the Arlington side. Jack asked if we want to endorse the Alewife connector as a committee. He also suggested that we divide the issue in two. The MDC plan and the Alewife connector should be treated as two separate issues. We tabled the Alewife connector issue and worked on the memo endorsing the MDC plan. Jack suggested that we favor the connection of the Mystic River with other trails in the Alewife area encouraging the Town to get involved in the project.

A motion was made to endorse the MDC plan. The motion passed without dissent.

Planning and development updates.

Improved bike parking. Bike parking will be on the agenda of the Arlington Redevelopment Board at the November 18 meeting. At that same meeting VHB will be making a presentation to the ARB about the renovation of Arlington Center.

Rails to Trails. The Rails to Trails Conservancy wants to have a tour of the bikeway during their national conference. ABAC and the planning department will help. Craig Della Penna and representatives from the other towns on the path will attend the December ABAC meeting. The proposed date of the tour is June 28, 2003.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35.